

Colorado Starts the Snow Season Off with Normal Accumulation

Denver, CO – January 8th, 2015 – As we began the new water year it looked like summer might never end given the unseasonably warm temperatures and nearly nonexistent precipitation throughout October. Thankfully November brought cooler temperatures and snow to the mountains across the state, but then the moisture dried up before Thanksgiving and the state experienced an unusual lack of moisture for over two weeks. Skiers and winter enthusiasts had no reason to be concerned however as a few big storm systems brought significant snow accumulation just in time for the Christmas holiday and boosted the statewide snowpack totals to 99 percent of median as of January 1. According to Brian Domonkos, Snow Survey Supervisor with the NRCS, “The statewide snowpack is right where it needs to be for this time of year. It’s difficult to make up an early season deficit in snow accumulation, so being right at normal is a great place to be.”

Unfortunately not all of the major basins in Colorado are reporting normal snowpack conditions. According to January 1 snow surveys conducted statewide, the Upper Rio Grande and San Juan, Animas, Dolores, & San Miguel basins are reporting totals at just 71 and 75 percent of median respectively. This is not great news for these areas which have not recorded a normal seasonal snowpack since 2010. If these basins don’t receive increased precipitation over the next few months, they may be looking at their fifth consecutive year of below normal snowpack and seasonal streamflow runoff. The other major basins are faring much better so far this season with snowpack totals for January 1 ranging from 114 percent of median in the Colorado basin to 99 percent of median in the Gunnison basin. East of the Continental Divide the South Platte basin is at 112 percent of median.

Statewide reservoir storage is in good shape; end of December storage totals were at 103 percent of average. The distribution across the state varies however, with the southern basins all reporting below average storage and the northern basins all reporting above average storage. The Upper Rio Grande basin has the lowest percentage at just 67 percent of average and 19 percent of capacity. The South Platte basin has the highest storage totals, which are at 124 percent of average and 82 percent of capacity.

The January 1 streamflow forecasts follow the trends in snow accumulation and precipitation received this season across the state. Predictions for the northern streams call for above normal flows this spring and summer while outlooks for the southern streams are below normal.

Colorado's Snowpack and Reservoir Storage as of January 1, 2015

BASIN	% MEDIAN SNOWPACK	% LAST YR.'S SNOWPACK	% AVERAGE RESERVOIR STORAGE	LAST YR.'S % AVERAGE RESERVOIR STORAGE
GUNNISON	99	98	106	80
COLORADO	114	113	109	98
SOUTH PLATTE	112	113	124	114
NORTH PLATTE	101	90	---	---
YAMPA/WHITE	105	99	114	109
ARKANSAS	114	100	79	59
RIO GRANDE	71	77	67	61
SAN JUAN, ANIMAS, DOLORES, SAN MIGUEL	75	75	90	83
STATEWIDE	99	97	103	88

For more information about Colorado's snowpack or supporting water supply related information, please go to the Colorado Snow Survey website at:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/co/snow/>

Or contact Brian Domonkos, Colorado Snow Survey Supervisor at
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